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## Former Montana bishop appeals sentence of deposition

by Jan Nunley

**(ENS)** Former Montana bishop Charles I. "Ci" Jones filed an appeal May 11 to the Court of Review of the Trial of a Bishop, challenging the final judgment of the Court for the Trial of a Bishop deposing him, on multiple grounds of "reversible error."

The case concerns sexual misconduct with a woman parishioner and employee of a parish in Russellville, Kentucky, where Jones was rector prior to his election as bishop of Montana in 1986. The misconduct took place from 1981-83. Jones submitted his resignation to the diocesan council effective Ash Wednesday, February 28, following a February 14 decision by the Court for the Trial of a Bishop deposing him for sexual misconduct.

Jones' 17-count appeal disputes virtually all the actions of the trial court in the case, including denials of multiple motions made by Jones' attorneys to dismiss it entirely based on a plea of "former jeopardy." Jones maintains that he had already been disciplined by former Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning for his misconduct, and that filing of the case in the wake of revisions to Title IV of the canons is the ecclesiastical equivalent of a second accusation and trial on identical charges.

The court's decision countered that the presiding bishop does not have the canonical authority to discipline a sitting diocesan bishop, and therefore any "pastoral" arrangement Jones made with Browning would not affect the possibility of future action against him.

### **Filing of civil suit denied**



The appeal also alleges "improper influence" on the court by Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, in calling for a sentence of deposition.

But reports that Jones has filed a civil suit against Griswold or the national offices of the Episcopal Church are untrue, said Jones.

"No, a civil suit has not been filed," Jones explained in an email to ENS. "Normally, one has to exhaust all administrative remedies prior to bringing a cause of action before a civil court." When he resigned in February, Jones agreed as part of his settlement not to sue the Diocese of Montana, its members or other groups and individuals associated with it.

"My hope remains that somehow the truth will become public, but there are very strong forces working against that," he said, but did not specify any individuals or groups.

As for the possibility of future service in the Episcopal Church, Jones was doubtful. "I think this is such a remote possibility that we haven't even considered it...I think in all seriousness that I have probably been pretty much black-balled from any consideration for another position in the church--even as a lay person," he wrote. "We'll just have to see what God does with all of this."

### **Staying in Montana**

Despite the appeals and other legal procedures that are still in progress, Jones said that he is not planning big changes in his life. "Ashby and I have decided, with the help of our therapists and our four sons, that we will not make any major decisions for one year," he said. "We have been under so much stress for so long (fifteen years without a sabbatical or real vacation) that we really do not know what it is like not to have the tremendous workload of a diocese with this geography and personality."

Jones denied rumors that he and his wife plan to move from Montana, or even leave the United States. "We plan to appeal the court's decision and continue living in Montana, the state we have grown to love," he wrote. "We will ride our Harley-Davidsons and ski a lot... we plan to enjoy our freedom and lives with our family."



In exchange for Jones' resignation in February, the diocesan Standing Committee and Diocesan Council had agreed to give him a \$170,000 settlement which included forgiving his home mortgage with the diocese.

**--The Rev. Jan Nunley is deputy director of the Episcopal News Service.**

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